

CHAPTER FOUR

A Period of Armed Truce

FIVE days before the conclusion of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of February, 1921, a bloodless *coup d'etat* was engineered by two men. One of them, Seyyid Zia ed-Din (Taba-Tabai), was a young politician in his early thirties, imbued with liberal reformist ideas. As editor of the Teheran newspaper *Ra'd*, he was in frequent contact with the British Legation. This led some to suspect that he had sold himself to the British; such a violently anti-British observer of Iranian affairs as M. Lesueur called him the "damned soul of the British Legation." * Others, like James Balfour, whose controversial book about Iran led to a lawsuit and its subsequent withdrawal from sale, believed that Zia ed-Din was an honest reformer as distinguished from pro-British reactionaries. Balfour called Zia's party a "party of legitimate reform, which had looked towards England for at least moral support in their struggle for freedom."² Zia ed-Din was the political leader of the coup; the military leadership was in the hands of Reza Khan. The latter was the commander of the Iranian Cossack Division, a military formation initially under tsarist Russian influence, from which White Russian officers were removed in October, 1920. Upon the successful completion of the coup Reza Khan was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the

Army. In this capacity he exerted powerful influence upon public affairs.

The first official act of Seyyid Zia's government was the conclusion of the Soviet-Iranian treaty on February 26. The making of the treaty was not Seyyid Zia's achievement because negotiations between the two countries began in 1920 under Moshir ed-Dowleh's premiership

[^]*Les Anglais en Perse* (Paris, 1923).
2 *Op. dt.* p. 255.